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AUTHOR Fair, Jean
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ABSTRACT

The central purpose of social studies education is the development of citizenship. In social studies education four elements are essential. The first element is knowledge. Social studies must draw heavily upon the social sciences, including history, and from related fields such as law, psychology, the humanities, journalism, and the arts. Young people must come to see that the ideas which make up the body of the scholarly fields change over the year. Knowledge must be balanced between understandings needed in young people's own immediate social worlds and society at large, and it must be intellectually honest. The second element is values. Identifying their own values must be a part of students' education in social studies. So also must be recognizing the values of others. The third element is skills in acquiring information and thinking about social affairs. Young people need skills to make their knowledge and values active and so continue in the lifelong process of learning. The fourth element is social participation. Everyone lives as part of social groups, which influence and are influenced by their members. Without direction toward action, social studies education becomes passive. The paper concludes with a description of the characteristics of programs which must be implemented if these four elements are to be translated into actual learning opportunities. Included among these characteristics are that objectives must be clear, learning activities must be appropriate for objectives, varied instructional materials are needed, the classroom climate must be supportive, and there must be assessment and evaluation. (Author/RM)

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Dr. Jean Fair
Professor Emeritus, Wayne State University
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A RATIONALE FOR SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN MICHIGAN

INTRODUCTION

The central purpose of social studies education is the development of citizenship. The goal of citizenship, in turn, is the constant effort through decision and action to foster just relations among people and institutions.

The welfare of individuals and the welfare of society are tightly bound. Young people need to learn to live well as social beings. From childhood on they are part of social worlds extending from their everyday groups and communities to their country and the world at large. To find their ways in these social worlds young people themselves need the personal capabilities and moral commitments for wise choices of action in their social, political, and economic roles, those present and those yet to come. The society in which young people will continue to live is one of continuity and change, diversity and commonality, difficulty and opportunity, democracy and its insufficient practice. Such a society needs knowledgeable, thoughtful, and ethical participation by its citizens.

Both personal and social welfare require that schools educate for citizenship. Many areas of school programs as well as out-of-school life contribute to the development of citizens. Still it is social studies education which focuses directly and systematically upon those learnings required. Schools therefore must provide it for all young people and from kindergarten through high school.

In social studies education four elements are essential: knowledge; democratic and humane values; skills in acquiring information and thinking about social affairs; and social participation. Programs must bring these elements together to foster a sense of efficacy, sound decision making, and responsible action.

The consequences of slipshod education for citizenship are severe.

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Young people and their schools, parents and the public, all must accept their responsibility for vital social education.

FOUR ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

1. Knowledge

Developing knowledge has long been accepted as a major goal. Yet questions about what knowledge continue.

Whatever has been traditionally included is not necessarily the knowledge of most worth. Neither are items of information organized as mere description or narrative, nor sweeping abstractions outside students' experiences and understanding. Although what young people are to learn need not be limited to the instantly useful, it ought to have recognizable and projected helpfulness in comprehending their social worlds and in making the decisions surely to be called for.

1.1. Concepts and Generalizations Are Significant.

What young people ought to develop is knowledge of powerful concepts, generalizations, and theories. More comprehensive and more surely supported, such knowledge accounts for new particulars encountered in the course of living. Knowledge in the form of ideas can replace the confusion of unfamiliar and discrete events with some degree of meaning and so allow for some degree of influence and direction.

Items of information are not unimportant. Some few are significant in themselves. Others are important as information about a particular, problematic condition, "the facts of the case," necessary for analysis and decision making. Most important, however, is acquiring further information which can be reorganized with the old in the form of concepts and generalizations. Out of scanty information sound ideas can rarely be formed. Unless relations among facts are grasped, what might become powerful ideas are left as empty verbalizations, memorized but inert. Young people need a

rich fund of information, but information selected with the intent of developing ideas.

1.2. Knowledge Must Represent the Best of Scholarship.

Social studies must draw heavily upon the social sciences, including history, and from related fields such as law, psychology, the humanities, journalism, and the arts. Education in the social studies does not aim to turn students into social scientists. Suitable organization for scholars in some academic field may not be suitable for the learning stages of young people. Many of the problems of society which students must address are not dealt with handily by any one field. Nevertheless, from the fields of scholarship comes the surest knowledge we have. Young people are entitled to make it their own. Society properly expects schools to rely upon it.

Of course, that the fields of scholarship have already developed significant ideas does not mean that students simply memorize them. Students must have experiences appropriate for understanding.

Moreover, the scholarly fields are both bodies of knowledge and methods of inquiry. Students must come to see relations between the questions and hypotheses directing inquiry and the means of producing evidence in support. By their own inquiry students can find and interpret information, make knowledge for themselves. Understanding the ways in which claims to knowledge are generated encourages both evaluation of its worth and continuing reformulation.

1.3. Knowledge Develops.

Young people must come to see that the ideas which make up the body of the scholarly fields change over the years. Knowledge is not fixed. Changing conditions require not merely new or current information but new directions in thought, even in interpreting the past. Fresh conceptual frameworks and more basic theory do better at accounting for social relations, describe more

accurately, and predict more surely. Students must see that their own knowledge like that of scholars is the basis for further knowledge, deeper and revised.

1.4. Knowledge Must Be Balanced.

All of the social sciences--and whatever illuminates from other fields--ought to be represented in the social education of young people: history, political science, sociology, anthropology, geography, and economics. All of them speak to the problems of social living. One field strengthens the others. Neither the past nor the present can be neglected, while both ought to point to the future. Study of what is American is clearly essential. Still the reality of world interdependence requires studies not only of the peoples of Canada, Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, but also of the global system itself.

Young people must understand what is meant by a frame of reference. They must learn to see events and conditions from the standpoints of the several groups of people affected by them, whether Americans or peoples elsewhere. Part and parcel of students' understanding ought to be comparisons of past and present, one area and another, one system with others, this point of view and another.

Knowledge must also be balanced between understandings needed in young people's own immediate social worlds and society at large. The former is often slighted for the latter. Nonetheless, even pervasive social problems need not be considered as public issues only, without recognized relation to students' own lives. Young people should see their social studies education as helpful in their everyday living.

Lastly, students need balance in their knowledge of both the good and the bad in human society, of people's successes and failures, of their dreams

and struggles, of what is or has been noble, contemptuous, or simply mediocre. If human society has difficulties, injustice, and even misery, it may also have joy and promise of human betterment. Views of society as either largely rotten or almost unblemished encourage apathy, not a sense of efficacy.

1.5. Knowledge Must be Intellectually Honest.

The best of knowledge describes the social world as it is and not necessarily as people may like to believe it is. Because such knowledge may contradict the beliefs or interests of some in the community or of some powerful groups or organizations, indeed of some students themselves, knowledge in social studies can be the subject of controversy and pressure. Because young people must learn to think through controversial issues, their knowledge can not be limited or distorted by what is merely congenial.

For knowledge does matter. While classrooms need not exclude bits of information contributing primarily to enjoyment, passing interest is not enough. Mere collections of information are soon forgotten. What young people and their society need is sound knowledge that can be brought to bear on the social world, knowledge that makes a difference.

2. Values

Neither schools nor social studies classrooms can be wholly neutral when it comes to matters of value; virtually all actions express the primacy of some values over others. Still schools and classrooms can act in accordance with basic values significant to them and society, and they can and must avoid the indoctrination of particular values.

2.1. Core Values are Vital.

Schools and especially social studies classrooms ought to model the respect for human dignity upon which democratic society rests. Both formal and informal curriculum should be based on reasoned commitment to such core values

as open opportunity for all, regardless of race, ethnic group, sex, religion, social class, creed, abilities, or handicaps; freedom to teach and learn and to express ideas; respect for the power of thought; support for the rule of just laws, the right and responsibility to participate in their making, and due process; concern for the welfare of others; the opportunity to search for satisfying directions and personal fulfillment; and social justice which balances individualism with the common weal, as much of good with the least concommitant loss.

2.2. Value Conflicts Are Ever Present.

Important as commitment to core values may be, their meaning in the ordinary circumstances of living is rarely clear and certain. Moreover, these values are held with a host of others, widespread in our culture: competition, cooperation, materialism, achievement, enjoyment, loyalty to family and friends, desire for status or power, racism, security, and more. Ours is a complex and pluralistic society. True that people hold many values in common. Yet values also differ from group to group and person to person, while every individual faces the dilemmas arising out of conflicts in his or her own values. As society shifts and changes, values change, or seem less sure, or require reinterpretation. It is hard to say which of conflicting values will carry most weight in the actual situations of either personal living or social policy making. Students must learn to expect a competition of values.

2.3. Values Must be Recognized.

Identifying their own values must be a part of students' education in social studies. So also must be recognizing the values of others and their seeming sense in the terms of others' lives or cultures.

2.4. Thoughtful Examination of Values is Indispensable.

Values are inherently part of choosing courses of action both in personal

living and society's policy making. Students must see the values at stake, consider their consequences, choose priorities for particular situations, and reconcile incoherent values. Neither indoctrination nor expression of off-the-cuff preference is thoughtful. Nor is the belief warranted that just any value is as good as any other; some values are better than others as are the reasons to support them and the consequences to follow.

Both the support of exemplary models in practice and thoughtful examination of values are necessary. Out of such maturing experience comes personal integrity, based, not on expedient accommodations, but moral principles.

3. Skills

Young people need skills to make their knowledge and values active and so continue in the lifelong process of learning.

3.1. Students Need Communication Skills Focused on Social Affairs.

Especially important is the ability to read with comprehension, thought, purpose, and satisfaction. Of the many reasons to read, two stand out. Much of what is of significance for citizenship is in print. Readers can move through material at their own pace, one appropriate to their abilities or purposes, be it skimming, comprehending or reflecting. Although general reading ability is important, it does not guarantee competence in reading about social matters. Students must be able to read not only the content of social science and history in their textbooks and similar sources, but also newspapers, magazines, charts, maps, cartoons, graphs, and literature. Hence, social studies education must include both help in reading such material competently and encouragement for reading widely.

Since television and to a lesser extent films are increasingly sources of information and points of view, young people need from social studies education what is ordinarily overlooked: seeking out the worthwhile; attending

with comprehension; and evaluating critically.

Moreover, students must develop ability to state their ideas in writing: to describe, narrate, explain, summarize, and support their positions in plain and organized fashion.

Discussion is so commonplace an activity in the life of society, so much a means of influencing opinion and arriving at decisions that social studies education must foster young people's skills: listening to others, offering information, advocating, keeping on subject, clarifying, supporting, summarizing, and finding common ground.

3.2. Students Must Learn to Find Information.

Students also need skills in using books as references, locating information in the library, surveying, interviewing, and observing at first hand. Such skills are tightly related to formulating directing questions: what is to be found should be what students aim to know. While at times it is enough to look up some few specific items of information, finding out ought ordinarily to be related to search for what students consider significant to themselves and society.

3.3. Young People Must Learn to Think for Themselves.

Passive and gullible citizens can not promote a just society nor develop themselves to the full. Thinking for yourself goes hand in hand with a sense of efficacy.

In social studies classrooms students need systematic opportunities to criticize interpretations and positions by noticing assumptions, facts included or omitted, on subject or off, consistencies and inconsistencies. Students must make inferences, take positions and problems apart, and organize accounts and explanations. Students must practice the processes of conceptualizing, and of formulating hypotheses and marshalling the evidence to support or deny

them. Above all, young people must practice applying the ideas they have developed.

Although much of students' thinking is likely to lead to positions already formulated by others, students will have practiced inquiry, searched for meaning. Nevertheless, education in social studies ought to encourage fresh points of view. What is unconventional or original, especially when it stems from search, contributes richness to social thought.

3.4. Decision Making is Crucial.

Knowledge, values, and skills come together in decision making, surely a competence required of citizens. Decision making is a form of search: recognizing and analyzing a problematic situation; seeing alternative courses of action and projecting their consequences; identifying the values at stake and making the trade-offs almost certainly required; and coming to a reasoned position worthy of commitment. No previously set answers can be had. Upon occasion no decisions can be made and the proper course to take is to suspend judgment.

Special care must go to seeing that neither teachers nor students impose their particular values or positions on individual students. Pre-determined consensus can not be required. Decision making must be open and honest, thoughtful and systematic. While airing opinions may be stimulating at times, mere expression of opinions is not decision making. Of course, students have a right to free speech. Yet in social studies education statements ought to be subject to the challenge of serious examination. Some decisions are, indeed, better than others, and some positions are simply untenable.

All of these skills should be developed in significant social studies content. Practicing skills in trivial content is using students' time inefficiently. What is significant deserves to be discussed, thought over, and put to use.

4. Social Participation

Everyone lives as part of social groups, which influence and are influenced by their members. Without direction toward action, social studies education becomes passive.

4.1. Classrooms and Schools are Places for Participation.

Since social studies classrooms and schools are themselves social situations, they can offer ample opportunities for group interaction and enterprise. Many kinds of activities are the ground for majority and minority views, compromise, negotiation, advocacy, empathy, try-outs of new ways of behaving, and decision making.

4.2. Much Can be Learned Outside School Walls.

Observation is useful: for example, of harvesting, a court of law, or a newsroom. Community interviews and surveys collect information often hard to get from other sources. Discussion meetings with people of different backgrounds, ages, or race furnish insight.

4.3. Community Service is Valuable.

Young people, especially adolescents, ought to engage in community work. Some may be in ordinary jobs for pay. Some may volunteer service in day-care centers, political campaigns, cleaning up a local river, or whatever. Every community has work in need of doing. Young people need the satisfactions of responsibility and the chance to rub elbows with many sorts of people. Schools and social studies classrooms along with other community organizations ought to make such experience possible. Such participation ought to be accompanied by serious consideration of what can be learned: the workings of an organization; the give-and-take in human relations; or the requirements of effective roles.

These four elements--knowledge, valuing, skills and social participation--are integrally related. Knowledge, values, skills, all require a base in concrete

experience of participation. Information and ideas do not point to decisions until they are melded with values and thought. Values held without thought of their consequences are dangerous. Inability to communicate and find out makes for ignorance and cuts off participation. The best of knowledge and values amount to little unless they are put to use. Participation without knowledge, thought, and humane values can not be reconciled with the requirements of personal growth or the principles of a just society. Each element supports the others in making decisions required for participating in social life.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAMS

If the four elements of social studies education are to be translated into actual learning opportunities proper for the many sorts of young people, programs will have to show at least these characteristics.

1. Social Studies Must Be Provided for All Students, Kindergarten through High School.

Learning opportunities must be genuine, mindful of students' backgrounds, capabilities, and purposes, and available to all, of whatever racial or ethnic group, sex, creed, age level, or social class, whether handicapped or not, whether of great, few, or ordinary abilities.

2. Emphasis Should Go to Basics Widely Applicable.

Social studies programs ought to emphasize what has wide and continuing usefulness, not ready recounts, opinions, or simple collections of information about one topic or another. The focus ought to be on what is basic to further learning and inquiry into the human condition.

Social studies must be more than a mere collection of current emphases: consumer education, reading, multicultural education, law-focused education, the study of futures, value clarification, career education, environmental education, global education, all to be sure, valuable. A well-constructed program will include them as aspects of a whole. It is not enough, by way of

example, to see the economic system largely through the eyes of consumers, though consumer roles ought not be neglected. Effective reading about social affairs, to cite another example, requires both concrete experience and conceptual baggage, quite as necessary for meaning as vocabulary and specific reading skills. Surely young people ought to see their own racial, ethnic, and religious roots, but to see them cut of relation to those of others or the coherence of society is to miss the point of cultural pluralism and the need for social justice. Understanding American society needs melding with global perspectives. A proper social studies program will integrate many areas of concern, out of which basic learnings grow or to which basic learnings are applied.

3. Selection Will Have to Be Made.

It is patently impossible for students to "cover everything."

The elementary program ought to be broad, drawing widely from several fields. As students at secondary levels mature, their interests and abilities call for more specialized choices. What counts for society is a sufficient pool of competencies among its citizens, not identical competence. Even so, secondary programs ought to have coherence in place of additions of topics or courses.

The difficulties of selection are eased when programs give up the repetition of topics, reworked in greater detail, from grade to grade. What is needed is fresh vantage points and broader applications.

4. Programs Need Defensible Structure.

No one organizational scheme is consistently best among those which aim to integrate all elements of social studies education. Curricular programs may be organized around public issues or young people's personal problems; around threads of identified concepts, skills, and values; by academic fields especially when they can be related one to another; around topics with a focus; by chronology, especially when major interpretations can be built; out of inquiry

and search by concerned individuals or groups; or from the requirements of investigations or social participation. Variety accommodates a broader range of purposes and appeals. Whatever the organizational schemes, social studies programs need conceptual frameworks and structure.

5. Common Goals Must Be Translated into Local Programs.

Both the State of Michigan and local school districts have common goals which mesh with goals for social studies education. Common goals, however, do not require standardized ptograms. Worthwhile social studies classrooms are more likely where schools, teachers, students, and their communities commit themselves to their own implementation of common goals.

6. Objectives Ought to Be Clear.

Although variations should and will occur from one person to another, what is to be learned ought to be clear enough to all to give purpose and direction to classroom learning at every grade level. Objectives should be conceived in terms of both behavior and content, not merely in one or the other. Many specific kinds of learning can be suitably phrased as specific performance objectives. Nevertheless, many other complex and significant kinds of learning can be stated only in more general terms, though still as behavior in content. The demands of stating objectives in terms of specific items of readily identifiable or measurable performance ought not to govern the selection of all objectives.

7. Learning Activities Must Be Appropriate for Objectives.

Learning activities must be rich and varied enough to appeal to many sorts of students and to allow for individualization. Especially must activities provide opportunities for students to learn whatever is identified in objectives.

From early childhood through high school young people need concrete experience in observing and influencing the workings of the social world. Without that experience formal thought and mature values can not grow.

Both expository and discovery methods are appropriate when they complement each other in the stream of learning activities. Genuine inquiry calls for both.

Controversy can not be excluded from classrooms. It is not the cut and dried but the differences of competing points of view that are essential for decision making.

Thus, observing at first hand, or from films or filmstrips, or pictures; role playing or simulating; action projects; responding to and raising questions of thought and value; chairing a meeting or committee; reading for many purposes and in many kinds of material; writing to explain; formal practice in processes of decision making: all these and many more will make up more effective classroom patterns than day-in-and-day-out recitations from textbooks and daily lectures by teachers.

8. Varied Instructional Materials Are Needed.

For varied, rich, and significant learning activities a wide range of instructional materials are indispensable. Many modern textbooks recognize this requirement by including a variety of reading materials and suggested activities, accompanied by additional, related, non-text material. Whether or not from published programs, students need case studies, realia, simulation exercises, maps, graphs, recordings, first hand accounts, filmstrips, reading materials at suitable levels of difficulty, and much more in their classrooms or from a handy media resource center or library.

9. Classroom Climate Must Be Supportive.

Significant learning also requires a classroom climate which is supportive, open to the participation of all, aimed toward work and the possibility and satisfaction of accomplishment, and careful of the worth of every individual. Crucial is the freedom to teach and learn, to inquire and decide. Especially must social studies classrooms and schools at large exemplify, not merely talk about, the best practices of democratic society.

10. Progress Needs Assessment and Evaluation.

Progress toward objectives representing all four elements of social studies education needs careful assessment and evaluation. Assessment and grades based chiefly on attainment of knowledge turn effort away from other just as essential objectives. Assessment must not be limited to what can be tested cheaply or easily; not all significant learning in social studies can be measured precisely in practical ways. Tests are only one among many sources of evidence. Informal evaluation of hard-to-test-for objectives focuses attention on the need to achieve them.

Students, their teachers, and their parents need to see what has been and what is yet to be attained. Schools need information for regular and systematic consideration of the effectiveness of programs. The public needs information for policy making at local, state, and national levels.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Many kinds of people have vested interests in social studies education. Teachers and administrators must give leadership to strengthening opportunities. Young people have responsibilities for their own learning. The public must set and support sound policies. Challenging social studies programs are more likely when students, teachers, parents, administrators, and people from the community at large practice their right and responsibility to participate in decision-making, each group in its own way. Sound education for citizenship influences the common lot of all.